SIR EDWARD APPLETON

Dr. R. L. Smith-Rose writes:—

Your comprehensive obituary notice of Sir Edward Appleton makes no reference to his work in the international scientific field. Over a period of some 40 years Professor (later Sir Edward) Appleton was very closely concerned with the work of the International Scientific Radio Union, known among research workers throughout the world as U.R.S.I. He was president of the union during the period 1938-1954 and, both before and after this, had been chairman of several of its commissions dealing with the scientific investigation of radio wave propagation by way of the ionosphere, and with the origin of atmospheric disturbances and their effect on radio reception conditions in all parts of the world. As the outstanding pioneer scientist in the study of ionospheric conditions and their dependence on the activity of the sun, he encouraged with untiring zeal research in these subjects all over the world.

Appleton was one of the most enthusiastic leaders in promoting the work of the second International Polar Year of 1932-1933. He participated in the establishment and operation of an ionospheric recording station at Tromso in Norway, where the first radio observations within Arctic regions were obtained. Twenty-five years later, as chairman of the U.R.S.I. Committee of the International Geophysical Year, he was again instrumental in sponsoring world-wide collaboration in a very comprehensive and advanced investigation of conditions in the ionosphere during a period of solar activity, which, in the event, proved to be the highest recorded during the previous 200 years of scientific studies.

In all this work, Appleton was not only an outstanding research scientist; he was also an inspiration, guide and wise counsellor to all the many younger physicists who were encouraged by his example to follow a career in radio research. His many students who graduated under him and continued to do research work stimulated by him are to be found today in all parts of the world; and he is acknowledged by them all to be the greatest pioneer of international scientific radio research.